

September 15, 2021 Planning Board/Board of Adjustment Minutes  
**This meeting was held jointly with the Union Township Committee. The minutes describe the presentation and discussion that followed**

***These minutes were approved at the December 2, 2021 Meeting***

**Call to Order and Notices:** Mr. Ford called the meeting of the Union Township Planning Board/Board of Adjustment to order at 7:01 p.m.

Open Public Meetings Act Notice: The Open Public Meeting Requirements of Law have been satisfied by our notices dated January 21, 2021, as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and January 20, 2021, as published in the Courier News. A copy of the notice has also been posted on the Township Website, the Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building and a copy has been filed with the Municipal Clerk.

**Members Present:** Mr. Mazza, Mr. Stothoff, Mr. Nace, Mr. Kastrud, Mr. Neary, Mr. Petitt, Mr. Ford, Mr. Beldon.

**Board Professionals Present:** Atty. Mark Anderson.

**Members Absent:** Mr. Kirkpatrick, Mr. Dix, Dr. Rasavage.

**Others: (Presentation- Camber Real Estate Partners, 7 Frontage Rd.)** Christopher Bellapianta-Camber Real Estate Partners, Henry Kent-Smith – attorney, Gary Dean – traffic engineer

**Presentation, 7 Frontage Rd, Blk 22 Lot 30.04**

Mr. Kent-Smith, attorney, advised Camber Real Estate Partners are here to present a proposal for redevelopment of 7 Frontage Road to the Township Committee, Planning Board and residents for input and feedback of the proposed development. He advised the state law allows for redevelopment, which would allow for the Township Committee to work with the Planning Board to designate an area in need of redevelopment and then prepare a redevelopment plan. He continued the advantage of going through the redevelopment process is two-fold, to design a plan of specific standards as to have control of the development of the property. The second is that the redevelopment process offers a long-term tax exemption, known as a PILOT. He described the significance of the PILOT program with regards to taxes.

Mr. Bellapianta advised they are proposing to develop the 15.68-acre parcel with a Class A, 220,000 square foot industrial property. The improvements would include 40' clear heights, 43 loading positions, 60 trailer parking spaces and 176 car parking spaces. He summarized the current condition of the vacant property. He advised their goal is to attract a responsible corporate tenant with this development with long term ratables. He advised the PILOT program offers taxes that are predictable, which would help to attract a buyer. Due to e-commerce, he advised demand for warehousing is at an all time high and would generate jobs.

Gary Dean, traffic engineer, advised access to the property would be via exit 13. He advised Frontage Road is DOT controlled. He reviewed traffic patterns to and from the proposed development.

Mr. Kent-Smith explained the public process required for reviewing the development along with timeframes for obtaining the approvals in the process. He advised there would be a series of public hearings in the process. He advised that the project would need to comply with the Highlands and the NJDEP stormwater regulations.

Mr. Bellapianta described the appearance of the proposed facility. He advised there would be a tree lined berm in the front of the property. Mr. Kent-Smith advised that the property in its current state, has a significant amount of impervious coverage without management of water runoff. The standards for stormwater regulations have significantly changed and would lead to better stormwater control.

Mayor Mazza asked for questions from township committee members. Mr. Stiger asked about the occupancy rate for this type of usage. Mr. Bellapianta advised that the occupancy is such that the buildings are leased prior to completion and demand is high for this type of facility. He continued the vacancy rate is 2-3%. Mr. Hirt asked about the anticipated truck traffic per day, noise generated and anticipated nuisance from this type of activity. Mr. Kent-Smith advised it depends on the tenant of the warehouse. It could be up to 60 trucks per day for a higher volume user or possibly 24 trucks per day. He continued in contrast, Pilot does this in one hour. He continued the ambient noise from route 78 will mask some of the truck traffic into the facility. He referred to the KB toys warehouse at exit 20 on Route 78 where a noise study was completed as an example. He advised they work with acoustical engineers to help screen the ambient noise coming from 78 and the site sound generation.

Mr. Stothoff advised that sound travels upward, and the subdivision that abuts the property is up in elevation. He asked what can be done with the sound that will travel uphill. Mr. Kent-Smith advised there will be an analysis that will be done to present to the Board. Mr. Stothoff advised the traffic pattern proposed was not in the concept submitted to the township and is not consistent with what is being presented tonight. He advised the additional traffic created would compound the traffic by existing development and recently approved development.

Mr. Ford asked for questions from the Planning Board. Mr. Ford commented there would be little difference regarding noise generated from Route 78 between the existing building and proposed building facing the highway since it would be similar in shape. Mr. Bellapianta advised the additional size of the building and berm with trees would help mitigate the noise. Mr. Beldon asked if there is the potential for the facility to be in operation on a 24-hour basis. Mr. Bellapianta advised it would be highly unlikely due to expense and the warehouse could potentially be more static. The building is a single side load building which attracts a lower volume business. He advised this could be a stipulation as well. Additional Board members advised due to the size of the proposed loading positions, trailer and car parking spaces this would not be a static facility.

Mr. Kastrud asked about the PILOT program and pros and cons of development if this were not a PILOT program with regards to the impact on tax revenue. He continued this is important as to whether or not the area is in need of redevelopment. Mr. Kent Smith advised the analysis takes time and the numbers projected for taxes are generic. Mr. Ford advised the computation done regarding taxes were not relatable. Mr. Kent Smith advised they would need to work with the tax assessor and committee. A board member asked for examples of similar buildings within a reasonable radius. Mr. Bellapianta advised he could provide some examples.

Mayor Mazza asked for comments from the public.

Fred Ingram, 10 Carhart Ct, commented that the width of Frontage Road is not adequate for the proposed truck traffic and current traffic flow.

David DeGiralamo, 70 Driftway, asked about the experience of the developer. Mr. Bellapianta described similar types of prior and present development. Mr. DeGiralamo commented that the presentation for traffic flow was not fully reviewed.

John Ross, 29 Baptist Church Rd, commented on the developer's assessment of truck traffic flow and advised that trucks are consistently displaced on Baptist Church Road. He commented that the additional truck traffic will create a larger issue on frontage road.

Dennis Glacken, 3 Carhart Ct, advised that Highland Ridge is the development immediately to the back of the property. He advised he is concerned about safety with this type of development and the possibility of 24-hour use.

Lauri Grygon, 6 Carhart Ct, described the safety, traffic and congestion concerns in the area. She advised she has a petition with 32 signatures regarding the noise in the area. She also does not believe that Frontage Rd would be able to handle the additional traffic created. Additional thought and consideration for the proposed development needs to be completed.

Brett Barrett, 120 Perryville Rd, asked about the types of products being sold. Mr. Bellapianta described some potential products but advised it could be anything. He advised hazardous materials would not be considered.

Brian O'Donnell, 132 Albert Dr, expressed concern on the size of the proposed facility. Mr. Bellapianta commented that it is not a high output facility.

Jim Morgan, 139 Perryville Rd, asked Mr. Dean to drive the proposed truck route to see the traffic conditions. He expressed concerns over the additional traffic and idling trucks. He advised most residents do not take exit 12 due to the traffic issues and will take exit 13.

Sudha Kantor, 18 Carhart Ct, advised the additional intensity of use and hours of operation will add additional truck noise with air braking and truck backup alerts. The noise goes up the hill to the residential development. Regarding the PILOT program, she advised of development that was approved in Franklin Township but was rejected by the Department of Community Affairs. She advised the property is not abandoned.

Mike Gatani, 7 Everett Rd, advised the ambient noise at the development is anywhere from 65-75 decibels with the addition of trucks, the noise spikes up to 98 decibels. He advised the noise currently created has caused his home to shake. Mr. Dean advised 50 decibels is the maximum allowable noise at night. He advised to contact the County Board of Health for noise. He continued there are sound studies that can be conducted to reduce the noise.

Debbie Hirt, 40 Springhouse Lane, commented on an ordinance for the traffic pattern but it is not successfully monitored, therefore imposed conditions would be difficult to impose and enforce. She advised Township residents do not want a warehouse facility.

Ellen Dekker, 38 Baptist Church Rd, advised she is concerned with the exhaust from additional trucks. She advised this section of 78 is dangerous and this will exacerbate the issue.

Bruce Bussell, 101 Country Acres Dr, advised due to the increase in truck traffic, there will not be a benefit to the town. He advised the roads would need to be fixed in order to consider this type of development.

Nicole Gratcofsky, 54 Baptist Church Rd, stated that trucks will ignore the sign regarding the tunnel and realize they cannot pass through, trucks will turn around on her driveway and yard. These trucks will get stuck for hours at a time. This has happened numerous times. She also commented on the hazardous area of route 78.

Gina Bussell, 101 Country Acres Dr, advised with regards to trucks and traffic, the developer will not know who the tenants are, therefore cannot know what will happen. She advised the truck traffic and noise is constant throughout the day and night.

Donna Chen, 18 Midvale Dr, commented that the Everett Rd sign has been knocked down numerous times due to trucks traveling trying to turn around in the development.

Mayor Mazza closed public comments.

**Motion to Adjourn:** There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 9:19p.m. A motion was made by Mr. Petit and seconded by Mr. Nace. All Ayes. No Nays. Motion carried.